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# Black Americans' Social Action Engagement in their Racial Community: Examining the Roles of Sociopolitical Control, Critical Reflection, and Racial Centrality

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Black Americans' Social Action Engagement in their Racial Community: Examining the Roles  
of Sociopolitical Control, Critical Reflection, and Racial Centrality

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Professional Psychology and Family Therapy  
Seton Hall University

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**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
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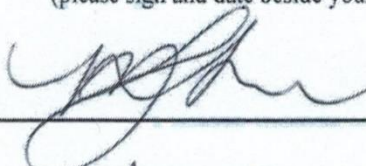
**APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE**

**Debeka V. Bennett**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ph.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2018**.

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**  
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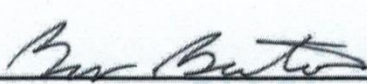
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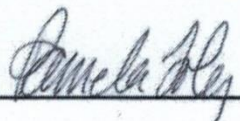
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## **Abstract**

### **Black Americans' Social Action Engagement in their Racial Community: Examining the Roles of Sociopolitical Control, Critical Reflection, and Racial Centrality**

Black Americans have been engaged in sociopolitical action since their involuntary enslavement in the United States beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Blacks have made significant strides in attempting to eradicate and bring awareness to social inequities experienced due to their race. However, not all individuals of African descent engage in sociopolitical behaviors for Black communities. Prior literature has attempted to assess factors that influence Blacks to engage in sociopolitical action but did not examine all the variables assessed in this study in one cohesive model. Therefore, this study aimed to examine Black Americans' sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for Black communities. Additionally, racial centrality and critical reflection—perceived inequality and egalitarianism was examined as moderating variables.

The following research questions guided this study: a) Does sociopolitical control predict Black Americans' engagement in social action for Black communities? b) Does critical reflection – perceived inequality strengthen the relationship between Black Americans' sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for Black communities? c) Does critical reflection – egalitarianism strengthen the relationship between Black Americans' sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for Black communities? d) Does racial centrality strengthen the relationship between Black Americans' sociopolitical control and engagement in social action for Black communities? A correlational, cross-sectional, research design was employed to answer the research questions and hypotheses.

The findings of this study indicated that Black Americans with perceived sociopolitical control engage in social action for Black communities. Racial centrality and critical reflection—perceived inequality and egalitarianism did not increase the likelihood Blacks with sociopolitical control engage in social action. However, racial centrality was a predictor of social action. Limitations, implications for future research, and recommendations were discussed.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my deepest appreciation for several individuals that helped make this body of work possible. I could not have done this without the following individuals: Dr. Lee, thank you for being my mentor. I appreciate your patience, guidance, and support throughout the process. I want to thank my committee members, Dr. Awosan, Dr. Beitin, and Dr. Foley for challenging and guiding me to critically analyze various aspects of the study. I grew professionally and personally with all of your assistance. I want to personally thank my Mom, Sophia, Kathia, Artesia, Mike, Amy, Veron, Jeremy, Collin, Adrian, and Cory for encouraging and motivating me to persevere during challenging moments.

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## **Chapter One:**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Problem**

U.S. history is filled with micro- and macro-level social injustices (Rothenberg, 2007), especially against Black Americans. Black Americans' experience in the United States has been unique in comparison to other racial groups. They are the only racial group whose humanity was denied by the U.S. Constitution (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Laws were enacted to legally discriminate against Black individuals (Sellers et al., 1998). Although many overtly racist laws have been changed in the past several decades, Black Americans continue to experience oppression based on their race; racial discrimination since the 1970's simply became more covert (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Moreover, historic and current racial domination projects, such as slavery, colonialism, and labor migration, are deeply embedded in U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Black Americans continue to encounter racial discrimination in educational, criminal justice, economic, and housing sectors, among many others (White-Johnson, 2012).

According to Hill (2016), being a Black or Brown person places one in a vulnerable position and susceptible to misfortunes, violence, illness and death in the United States. Hill posited that Blacks are perceived as disposable. Despite continued racial inequality, the advancement of the Black middle class once created an illusion of a post-racial era in the United States, particularly with the inauguration of Barack Obama as president. Yet, middle-class Black Americans still experience daily discrimination, and the majority of Blacks have not yet attained middle-class status (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Wingfield, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2015). The 2016

presidential election process, along with recently publicized police shootings of unarmed Blacks, illustrate the continued racial discrimination Blacks experience in the United States.

Despite the challenges Blacks endure, many of them have engaged in sociopolitical behaviors in an attempt to enhance the quality of life of Black communities. Historically, Black Americans have been actively involved in various liberation movements. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Nationalist movement, and Black Lives Matter represent some of the more visible efforts in the history of Black social movement. These social movements have fought for reparations, freedom, equality, among many other rights.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The psychological literature has attempted to shed light on factors that influence individuals' engagement in social action. There are primarily three theories that attempted to explain Blacks sociopolitical behaviors, namely, the internal-external control theory, psychological empowerment theory, and sociopolitical development theory (Rotter, 1966; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999; Zimmerman, 1995).

Rotter's (1966) internal-external control theory was one of the first models used to conceptualize Black Americans' social action behaviors. According to Rotter (1990), one's locus of control determines one's perception of the outcome of a situation. Two studies provided support for the theory by using internal-external control to predict Black Americans' activism on issues pertaining to the Black communities (Gore & Rotter, 1963; Strickland, 1965). However, in the vast majority of studies, internal-external control failed to predict social action (Thomas, 1970; Rotter, 1966; Geller and Howard, 1972; Hamsher, Geller, & Rotter, 1968). The internal-external control theory has been critiqued for lack of empirical support, and for its limited applicability for Black Americans, whose experiences of sociopolitical oppression are not fully

captured by the theory (Klandermans, 1983; Gootnick, 1974; Gurin, Gurin, Lao & Beattie, 1969; Abramowitz, 1974).

Zimmerman's (1995) theory of psychological empowerment allowed psychologists to focus specifically on sociopolitical control rather than a general locus of control as a critical factor in predicting social action, as previously examined in the internal-external theory. Psychological empowerment theory proposed that individuals must perceive themselves to have sociopolitical control for them to commit to social action (Zimmerman, 1995). The empirical literature has provided support for the theory that psychological empowerment increases engagement in community organizations and activities (Christens, Speer, & Peterson, 2011; Speer & Hughey, 1996; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Yet, given that not all individuals with sociopolitical control engage in social action, it became imperative to find potential factors that may moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action.

Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil's (1999) sociopolitical development theory, grounded in liberation psychology (Martin-Baró, 1994), highlighted an important factor in the process of engaging in social action. According to sociopolitical development theory, Black Americans must have critical awareness of social inequities for them to exert their sociopolitical power on issues concerning Black communities (Watts et al., 1999). Although few empirical studies have tested the theory, there has been some evidence to support the model (Ginwright & James 2002; Watts, et al. 1999; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). However, a recent study by Szymanski (2012) suggested that the centrality of race for Black Americans may be as important in their social action engagement as being critically aware of social inequities.

Black racial identity and development has been studied by many researchers over the years (Cross, 1971; Baldwin & Bell, 1982; Parham & Helms, 1981; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, &

Phagen-Smith, 2002), but Sellers et al.'s (1998) concept of racial centrality has made significant contributions to the psychological knowledge of Black racial identity. Research has shown that Black individuals who feel highly connected to their racial identity report high engagement in Black organizations (Chavous, 2000), feel connected to their racial community (Yap, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2011), and are critically aware of racial discrimination experiences (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). The extant literature has highlighted the importance of various factors in predicting individuals' engagement in social action, including sociopolitical control, critical consciousness, and racial centrality. However, research has yet to test a model that includes all three factors to predict Black individuals' social action behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to build on the psychological literature on social action and to develop a cohesive model of Black Americans' engagement in social action for Black communities. Given the body of evidence that suggests that sociopolitical control is predictive of social action, this is included as the main predictor in the model. The two components of critical reflection, as operationalized by Diemer, Rapa, and Park (2014), i.e., critical reflection – perceived inequality, and critical reflection – egalitarianism, and racial centrality are included as moderators in the model to help explain why some Black Americans with sociopolitical control engage in social action for their communities whereas others do not. Examining these moderators is significant because, as previously explained, literature currently proves there is a relationship between close connection with race and awareness of social inequities with sociopolitical engagement. This study further examined whether one's desire for equal opportunities influences social action engagement.

### **Conceptual and Operational Definition of Terms**

The following terms have been defined for the purposes of this study. These terms will be referred to throughout the study.

**Social action.** Social action in this study is operationalized by the score on the Involvement in African American Activism scale (Szymanski, 2012). African American Activism (social action) is “action aimed to decrease and/or eradicate racism and its negative effects and to improve the everyday lives of African Americans and the African American community as a whole” (Szymanski, 2012).

**Sociopolitical control.** Sociopolitical control is defined as “people’s belief about their skills and capabilities in social and political systems” (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991, p. 189) and is operationalized by the score on the Sociopolitical Control Scale (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991).

**Critical reflection.** Critical reflection refers to an individual “coming to see critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves” (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, & Rapa, 2015, p. 810) and is operationalized by the scores on the Critical Reflection – Perceived Inequality subscale and the Critical Reflection – Egalitarianism subscale of the Critical Consciousness Scale (Diemer, Rapa, & Park, 2014).

**Racial centrality.** Racial centrality is defined as the extent to which an individual’s race is experienced as a significant identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) and is operationalized by the score on the Racial Centrality Subscale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity Scale (Sellers, 2013).

## **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- a) Does sociopolitical control predict Black Americans’ engagement in social action for Black communities?

- b) Does critical reflection – perceived inequality strengthen the relationship between Black Americans’ sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for Black communities?
- c) Does critical reflection – egalitarianism strengthen the relationship between Black Americans’ sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for Black communities?
- d) Does racial centrality strengthen the relationship between Black Americans’ sociopolitical control and engagement in social action for Black communities?

### **Hypotheses**

The following were the hypotheses for the study:

- a) Black Americans’ sociopolitical control will predict their engagement in social action for Black communities, such that greater sociopolitical control will lead to greater involvement in African American activism.
- b) Critical reflection – perceived inequality will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action in Black Americans, such that greater critical reflection – perceived inequality will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.
- c) Critical reflection – egalitarianism will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action in Black Americans, such that greater critical reflection – egalitarianism will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.

- d) Racial centrality will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action in Black Americans, such that higher racial centrality will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.

### **Significance of the Study**

Extant research has examined racial inequality and discrimination against Blacks, social action in Black communities, and centrality of race among Blacks. The research on critical reflection is still in its nascent stage. Because these various constructs have, for the most part, been studied separately, it has been difficult to integrate the literature to understand the factors that may influence Black Americans' engagement in social action for Black communities. This study sought to integrate the theoretical and empirical literature on these constructs to develop a model that predicts Black Americans' social action behaviors.

This study builds on the empirical literature demonstrating the importance of sociopolitical control as a precursor to social action by identifying racial centrality and critical reflection as moderators of the relation between sociopolitical control and social action engagement. By identifying factors that moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action, this study sought to explain social action engagement among those with sociopolitical control. Moreover, this model could potentially help Black communities to increase Black Americans' social action engagement by increasing not only sociopolitical control but also race consciousness and critical reflection. Additionally, this is one of a few studies focusing on Black American adults' social action for their racial community, given that the extant literature has primarily focused on urban youths or college students (Ginwright & James, 2002; Gordon, 2008; Taft, 2006; Watts et al. 1999; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004;).



The specialty of counseling psychology has historically focused on multicultural and social justice issues. Counseling psychology recognizes that social issues, such as, racism, discrimination, poverty, lack of access to health services, impacts mental health and overall well-being (Nilsson & Schmidt, 2005). This study adds to counseling psychology's social justice mission. This study is in line with counseling psychology's focus on strengths, multiculturalism, prevention and outreach (Brown & Lent, 2008; Miller, Sendrowitz, Connacher, Blanco, de la Pena, Bernardi, & Morere, 2009). By understanding the factors that contribute to Blacks' engagement in social action, psychologists can empower Black communities to make strides towards reducing inequities and injustices given the social system they are a part of. Counseling psychologists can provide outreach and consultation services to facilitate social justice advocacy, the more the field better understand factors associated with sociopolitical engagement (Miller et al., 2009). This study can form the basis for developing an effective model for increasing Black communities' social action engagement, which also has implications for clinical practice. Counseling psychology plays a significant role in utilizing social justice related research to help shape training programs and clinical practices (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005). That is, clinicians can help empower Black clients to engage in social action by understanding the factors that contribute to social action engagement and exploring these factors in clinical practice. Given that helplessness has been found to be a risk factor for negative mental health outcomes (Zimmerman et al., 1999), increasing Blacks' sociopolitical engagement could help decrease helplessness and thereby buffer against negative mental health effects.

## **Conclusion**

Black Americans continue to endure social injustices unique to Black communities, in comparison to other racial communities in the United States. Blacks have a long history of social

action that has had a critical impact on issues affecting Black communities. Social action theories have attempted to explain Black Americans' social action behaviors. The extant literature has provided psychological theories on various factors that influence social action, including internal-external control (Rotter, 1966), sociopolitical control (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991), critical reflection (Diemer & Rapa, 2016), and racial centrality (Sellers et al., 1997), with some empirical support for each of these factors (Abramowitz, 1973; Christens et al., 2011; Gore & Rotter, 1963; James, 2002; Watts et al. 1999). However, there has yet to be a study that empirically examines a model that includes all of the above factors to predict Black individuals' engagement in social action for Black communities. This study sought to integrate these various theories to provide a model that predicts Blacks' social action engagement.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Blacks were involuntarily forced into enslavement at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were legally exploited in the U.S. for 400 years (Black History Milestones, n.d.). Unfair and unequal treatment toward Blacks became illegal in the U.S. in 1787, but Blacks continued to experience racial disparities thereafter and presently (Black History Milestones, n.d.). Extant literature provides evidence that Blacks have a history of engaging in social action since their arrival to the United States (Lowery, Marszalek, & Upchurch, 2003). There are a significant number of sociopolitical battles Black Americans have had to fight since their involuntary migration to the United States. For instance, Nat Turner led a slave rebellion movement in 1831 with approximately seventy-five followers as they fought for freedom (Black History Milestones, n.d.). Harriet Tubman effectively escaped slavery and utilized her knowledge to assist others toward freedom through a path highly recognized as the underground railroad (Salem Press, 2000). The Harlem Renaissance, a literary movement, during the 1920's and 1930's was led by several creatives (e.g. poets, playwrights, fiction writers) to uplift and express pride in their race while exposing the hardships Blacks experienced (Lowery et al., 2003). Rosa Parks' self-advocacy to remain in her seat when asked to give her seat to a White woman led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by Martin Luther King Jr. and E.D. Nixon.. The Black Panthers party, led by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, aimed to liberate Blacks through empowerment, self-defense tactics and effective ways to deal with police brutality (Lowery et al., 2003; Salem Press, 2000). Black unity and equal rights were strongly emphasized in the Black Panthers movement (Salem Press, 2000). The Black Lives Matter movement was created to increase awareness of the injustices endured by Blacks. The movement has increased the awareness of

police brutality and institutionalized racism, which led to a national discussion. Cases such as Trayvon Martin (Sanford, Florida), Michael Brown (Ferguson, Missouri), Sandra Bland (Hempstead, Texas), and Eric Garner (New York City, New York), have garnered national awareness of social injustice, misconduct, and maltreatment toward Black people in America, particularly between law enforcement and Black individuals.

Each sociopolitical movement has pushed Black communities forward. Although there have been several sociopolitical movements led by Black Americans that have resulted in the advancement of Black communities, there has yet to be a model that fully captures the factors that lead Blacks to engage in social action behaviors for Black communities. Understanding these factors are important because it could help Blacks efficiently organize their sociopolitical causes. Furthermore, it can enhance psychologists' understanding of the social injustices Blacks experiences and educate Blacks on ways to navigate the current sociopolitical system.

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework for understanding social action and review the empirical literature associated with these theories. Additionally, the chapter will provide an overview of the literature on critical reflection and racial centrality.

### **Theoretical Framework for Understanding Social Action**

Social action is a collective activity used to enhance human welfare, develop civic culture and enhance group life (Klandermans, 1983). Black Americans' social action aims to foster sociopolitical change, in an effort to enhance the quality of life for Black communities (Szymanski, 2012). Social action can include involvement in social organizations, staying abreast of sociopolitical issues, mentoring, advocating for social issues, social gatherings, writing letters to newspapers and/or politicians, boycotts, among many others (Szymanski, 2012;

Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). This section will review the theories on social action that serve as a framework for this study, drawing from social, community, and liberation psychology.

**Internal vs external control.** Rotter (1990) proposed that some individuals expect reinforcement or outcome to depend on either personal characteristics or behavior, i.e., internal factors, whereas others expect the outcome to depend on chance, fate, or powerful people, i.e., external factors. Externally-controlled individuals are likely to feel powerless about their ability to create change, whereas internally-controlled individuals feel they can influence their situation through sociopolitical action (Klandermans, 1983; Rotter et al., 1962).

A few studies have been able to successfully predict sociopolitical behavior on the basis of the internal-external control theory (Abramowitz, 1973). Gore and Rotter's (1963) study on Southern Black undergraduate psychology students investigated whether students' internal vs. external locus of control could predict their commitment to civil rights activism. The authors found that students with a commitment to civil rights activism were characterized as internals. Similarly, Strickland (1965) compared self-identified civil rights activists and non-socially active Black students and found civil rights activists were more likely to have internal control.

In contrast to Gore and Rotter's (1963) and Strickland's (1965) studies, several studies have found no relation between internal-external control and social action (Abramowitz, 1974). A study conducted on politically active liberal and conservative parents and their college-aged children found that the children's willingness to engage in sociopolitical behavior did not align with internal-external control theory (Thomas, 1970). Geller and Howard (1972) studied Yale University men's opposition to signing up for the draft because they did not agree with the reason the United States was at war with Vietnam. The participants included a control group and self-identified activists, whose racial demographic was not identified. The authors found no

difference between those who scored high or low on the internal-external control scale (Rotter, 1966) with regard to their belief in their ability to control their lives and influence others (Geller & Howard, 1972). The authors also examined psychosocial factors (e.g. values, attitudes, motives, etc.) but did not find any differences between the two groups. A similar study demonstrated no significant relationship between internal control beliefs and willingness to sign petitions among undergraduate students (Hamsher et al., 1968). Additionally, Blanchard and Scarboro (1972) found no association between internal-external control and undergraduate students' participation in the Georgia gubernatorial primaries or their political attitudes (Blanchard & Scarboro, 1972).

The discrepancies among the studies on internal-external control led to questions about the validity of the measures used, and a call for the development of measures that could be used reliably and validly (Abramowitz, 1974). Klandermans (1983) reported that social action was operationalized differently across the various studies using internal-external control to predict social action, which may have contributed to the inconsistencies in study results. For example, social action was operationalized in various studies as willingness to sign petitions, attitudes towards riots, and participation in sociopolitical movements (Klandermans, 1983). The internal-external control measure (Rotter, 1963) has been critiqued for being a non-specific instrument for assessing action-taking, for not measuring a stable personality trait, contrary to the theory, for not accounting for the complex factors affecting Black communities, and for not reflecting the changes in social conditions since the theory was formulated (Klandermans, 1983; Gootnick, 1974). Additionally, the theory of internal-external control (Rotter, 1990) does not attend to Black Americans' unique experiences (Gurin et al., 1969). Oler (1989) suggested modifications to the construct of internal-external control to make it applicable to Black Americans. According

to Oler, the theory of internal-external control does not account for social and cultural differences (Sue, 1981), and whether racist and oppressive systems influence individuals' locus of control in regard to their identity.

Empirical studies on Rotter's (1990) internal-external control theory failed to provide consistent evidence that locus of control predicts social action, especially for Black Americans. Because Rotter's internal-external control theory primarily assesses personal control, it may not capture individuals' sense of sociopolitical control. By contrast, psychological empowerment theory specifically looks at sociopolitical control as a critical factor in predicting social action (Zimmerman, 1995).

**Psychological empowerment.** Psychological empowerment involves an individual's perceived personal control, competency awareness, engagement in community, and an understanding of one's sociopolitical environment (Zimmerman, 1995). To attain psychological empowerment, an individual must believe that her or his goals are attainable, are aware of accessible resources and potential hindrances, and put effort into achieving the goal (Zimmerman, 1995). The three main assumptions of psychological empowerment are that a) people vary, and central identities (e.g., race, gender, being a mother, etc.) influence individuals' perception of sociopolitical control, b) psychological empowerment is demonstrated differently among people depending on the social context, and c) psychological empowerment is not a static trait and can fluctuate over time, such that people can experience both empowering and disempowering processes (Zimmerman, 1995).

The sociopolitical control scale (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991) was created to measure psychological empowerment assumptions. Psychological empowerment, measured by sociopolitical control, has been associated with self-esteem (Itzhaky & York, 2003). Itzhaky and

York (2003) examined factors that contribute to empowerment and found that self-esteem and sense of mastery were influential. In a study aimed to better understand interactional and intrapersonal components of psychological empowerment by explicitly focusing on empowering and disempowering processes among participants, Christens et al. (2011) found a relationship between psychological empowerment and high levels of community participation and psychological sense of community. Zimmerman et al. (1999) aimed to test the hypothesis that perceived sociopolitical control would serve as a buffer against the negative mental health effects of perceived personal helplessness in urban Black male adolescents. The results provided support for the authors' hypothesis. That is, helplessness was found to be a risk factor for negative mental health outcomes, but these effects were moderated by sociopolitical control (Zimmerman et al., 1999). Active participation in community organizations and activities has also been associated with psychological empowerment (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Christens and Peterson (2012) tested a path model in which sociopolitical control was a mediating variable between ecological supports, such as family cohesion and social support, and both proximal developmental outcomes, such as self-esteem and school importance, and distal developmental outcomes, such as psychological symptoms. The results provided support for the model, with ecological supports directly affecting developmental outcomes as well as indirectly affecting developmental outcomes by way of sociopolitical control (Christens & Peterson, 2012). Diemer and Li (2011) tested a model in which teacher sociopolitical support and parent and peer sociopolitical support influenced voting behavior and social action indirectly by way of sociopolitical control. The authors found that parent and peer sociopolitical support significantly predicted social action and sociopolitical control; however, sociopolitical control did not predict social action and only predicted voting behavior (Diemer & Li, 2011). Moreover, the authors



found that teacher sociopolitical support did not predict sociopolitical control (Diemer & Li, 2011).

Overall, psychological empowerment theory provides a framework for understanding how sociopolitical control relates to social action. However, to understand why some people with sociopolitical control engage in social action and others do not, it is important to identify moderating variables that may increase the likelihood that a person with sociopolitical control will engage in social action. Watts et al.'s (1999) sociopolitical development theory is a theory focused specifically on Black Americans' social experience that points to one such potential moderator.

**Sociopolitical Development Theory.** Sociopolitical development theory is based in liberation psychology (Martín-Baró, 1994) and incorporates Freire's (1993) notion of critical consciousness (Diemer, Wang, Moore, Gregory, Hatcher, & Voight, 2010). Sociopolitical development theory aims to understand the cultural and political environment that influences a person's status in society (Watts, Williams, & Jager, 2003). The primary aspects of sociopolitical development theory are awareness of sociopolitical oppression and desire to participate in social action (Watts et al., 1999). The theory assumes that people socially act on issues in which they believe their efforts will make a difference (Hope & Jager, 2014). The ability to imagine and help form a just society is crucial to the sociopolitical development process (Watts et al., 2003).

According to Watts et al.'s (1999) theory, there are five stages to sociopolitical development: acritical, adaptive, pre-critical, critical, and liberation. As a Black individual transitions through the stages, they are initially oblivious to social inequities but eventually become critically aware of oppression, developing a desire to eradicate oppression and improve social conditions (Watts et al., 1999). Reducing internalized racism and developing the ability to

independently and critically think are essential processes in Black Americans' sociopolitical development (Watts et al., 1999).

Watts et al. (1999) conducted a study on young Black American men from an impoverished neighborhood, participating in a Young Warriors program to enhance their critical consciousness, with the aim of promoting sociopolitical development. To achieve this goal, the researchers facilitated an 8-week group in which rap music videos, film, and television programs were used to stimulate discussions. Within each session, the facilitators helped enhance participants' critical thinking via discussions on relevant topics, such as African American culture, sexism, African Americans in mass culture, contributing factors towards the overall condition of their communities, gangsta lifestyle, community activism, and masculinity. Expressed critical thinking increased; however, the researchers could not determine whether critical consciousness increased community involvement and action, or decreased internalized oppression (Watts et al., 1999).

Youths' sociopolitical development process can be understood by examining their consciousness of societal inequities, commitment to sociopolitical change, and their actions to reduce sociopolitical inequities (Ginwright & James 2002); however, research on this process has been limited. One such study by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) examined predominantly White youths from two Surdna Foundation's Democratic Values initiatives to see whether the type of citizens they were (i.e., personally responsible, participatory, or social-justice oriented) predicted their civic orientation and capacities (i.e. desire to volunteer in the future, leadership efficacy, knowledge for community development). The two programs examined were advocating for either participatory citizenship activities (e.g. obeying laws, recycling, acts responsibly in community) or engagement that pursues social justice for a given cause (e.g. critically assess

social, political and economic structures, seeks out and addresses injustices) (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The results of the study revealed that the mere fact of advocating for participation does not equate to youths developing the skills to analyze and critique the causes of social problems (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The study further explained the importance of having a curriculum that helps promote both participatory citizenship behaviors and understanding of social justice issues (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

The main limitation of the sociopolitical development theory has been insufficient research to validate the theory. The literature on sociopolitical development theory has primarily used the theory to conceptualize awareness of sociopolitical inequities, systematic racism, the willingness to participate in social action, and self-efficacy to change social conditions (Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Diemer, Hsieh, & Pan, 2009; Watts et al., 1999; Zimmerman et al., 1999). However, the theory highlights an important component that has been missing from other social action theories. That is, sociopolitical development theory emphasizes the importance of Black Americans' critical awareness of racial oppression as a precursor to enacting social change.

### **Critical Reflection**

Freire's (2000) notion of conscientization, or critical consciousness, refers to a critical awareness of one's sociopolitical reality, which allows an individual to develop agency and create change (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016). That is, critical consciousness development involves "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2000, p. 35). The three components of critical consciousness are critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action. Critical motivation is an individual's ability and commitment to tackle perceived

injustices, critical action refers to the actions taken to respond to injustices, and critical reflection is the process of critically understanding the way one exists in the world (Diemer et al., 2015).

Diemer et al. (2014) divided critical reflection into two orthogonal components: critical reflection – perceived inequality and critical reflection – egalitarianism. Critical reflection – perceived inequality refers to critical awareness of social injustices, whereas critical reflection – egalitarianism refers to the belief in the ideal of equality among all social groups (Diemer et al., 2014).

Central to the construct of critical consciousness is the idea that critical reflection causes one to feel a sense of agency and efficacy to critically act on social inequities (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). The perceived inequality component of critical reflection has been linked to social action (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Similarly, adolescents with high levels of critical reflection were found to be highly committed to activism (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Ethnographic studies have also provided evidence that adolescents with awareness of social inequities are committed to social action (Gordon, 2007; Taft, 2006). The relationship between critical reflection – egalitarianism and political participation has received less empirical support. Diemer and Rapa (2016) conducted a study on the two components of critical reflection to examine their associations with conventional (e.g. voting, volunteering for a political campaign, and attending sociopolitical meetings) and nonconventional (e.g. supporting boycotts and staging demonstrations and protests) political action. The authors found that critical reflection – egalitarianism predicted conventional political action among Latino/as but not among Black Americans; however, critical reflection – perceived inequality predicted social action behaviors in both racial groups (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). According to Watts, Diemer, & Voight (2011), having political efficacy can potentially mediate or moderate the relationship between critical

reflection and critical action. However, it is also possible that critical reflection moderates the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. The studies described examined critical reflection as a mediating or moderating variable between sociopolitical control and social action (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Watts et al., 2011). These studies provide support for the importance of critical reflection as a potential catalyst for Black Americans with sociopolitical control to engage in social action for their community.

However, because critical reflection is an awareness of oppression broadly defined and not specific to racial oppression, Sellers et al.'s (1997) concept of racial centrality may be pertinent to consider when predicting Blacks' engagement in social action for their racial community. That is, Black Americans' critical awareness of general oppression may not necessarily lead them to engage in issues related to race. Along with critical reflection on inequality, Black Americans may need to consider race to be central to their identity, to engage in social action directly related to their racial community.

### **Racial Centrality**

Due to a long history of racial oppression, race has played a significant role in the lives of Black Americans (Sellers et al., 1998). Race is an identity that is central to many Blacks' self-concept (Yap et al., 2011). Yet the degree to which individuals view their race as salient may lie on a spectrum (Phinney, 1990).

Black racial identity has been conceptualized by many researchers to better understand the identity development process of Black individuals. Cross' (1971) Nigrescence model was one of the first influential theories to describe Blacks' racial identity development (Cokley & Chapman, 2009; Helms, 1990). His theory delineated the process of transitioning from internalized racism to critical awareness of social inequities, and developing a positive self-

concept as a Black individual (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). Cross (1991) proposed that many Black Americans have a negative self-concept because they internalize societal biases toward their race. Parham and Helms (1981) created the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale to operationalize the Nigrescence model. However, the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale was criticized for its inability to fully capture the complexities of Black Americans' racial identity (Akbar, 1989). Empirical research has provided insufficient evidence to fully validate the processes theorized in the Nigrescence model (Sellers et al., 1997).

In contrast to the developmental model of Cross (1991), Sellers et al. (1998) proposed the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), which sought to capture an individual's racial status at a particular point in time, without any value judgments about an inherently healthy or unhealthy racial identity status. The MMRI assumes that a) identity is both situationally influenced and a stable aspect of a person, b) a person has multiple identities that are hierarchically ordered, c) one's self-perceived identity is a valid indicator of one's identity, and d) racial identity status may change over time and should not be viewed as progressing in developmental stages (Sellers et al., 1998). The four dimensions created from these assumptions are racial salience, racial centrality, racial ideology, and racial regard. Racial centrality is defined as "the extent to which a person normatively defines himself or herself with regard to race" (Sellers et al., 1998, p.25). Racial centrality is stable across situations and represents the individuals' perception of their racial self across different settings (Sellers et al., 1998).

Yap et al. (2011) tested a series of moderated mediation hypotheses, wherein belongingness was predicted to mediate the relationship between racial centrality and life satisfaction and between private regard and life satisfaction, with this relationship being stronger for women than for men. The authors also hypothesized that discrimination would mediate the

relationship between public regard and life satisfaction, with this relationship being stronger for men than for women (Yap et al., 2011). The results indicated that the relationships between racial centrality and life satisfaction, and private regard and life satisfaction were mediated by belongingness only for women, whereas neither racial centrality nor private regard significantly predicted life satisfaction for men (Yap et al., 2011). Moreover, discrimination was not found to be a significant mediator in the relationship between public regard and life satisfaction, when belongingness was not included in the model (Yap et al., 2011).

Along similar lines, Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith (1998) examined the pattern of associations among racial centrality, public regard, private regard and Black American college and high school students' personal self-esteem. The authors found that racial centrality moderated the relationship between private regard and personal self-esteem, such that this relationship was significant in only those with high racial centrality (Rowley et al., 1998).

Although a slightly different construct from racial centrality, strength of ethnic identity is a related construct that has been found to predict quality of life (Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). Utsey et al. compared ethnic identity, race-related stress, and quality of life across various racial groups and found that Black American participants' ethnic identity, race-related stress, and quality of life were significantly higher than other racial groups. Further, ethnic identity and race-related stress were found to significantly predict quality of life (Utsey et al., 2002), providing further evidence of the importance of racial or ethnic identity in Black Americans' lives.

Black youths who are positively connected to their racial identity reported positive in-group relationships and experiences (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006). A study conducted on Black American undergraduate students found that students who

reported race as a central component of their identity were more engaged in Black-related organizations (Chavous, 2000). Individuals that identify their racial group membership as central to their identity tend to be more cognizant of discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Together these studies suggest that Black Americans are more likely to engage in race-related activities and organizations when their race is central to their identity. Thus, it is reasonable to theorize that for Black Americans, racial centrality may be an important moderator in the relation between sociopolitical control and social action.

### **Summary**

Black Americans' long-standing struggles with social inequities have led to a history of social action addressing an array of injustices (i.e. voting and educational rights, equal economic opportunities) that affect their racial communities (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Feeling efficacious to create social change is critical for Black Americans to engage in sociopolitical action (Diemer & Bluestein 2006; Watts et al. 2011). According to Miller (2001), social action is driven by one's connection to social groups and organizations that experience sociopolitical power struggles (Miller, 2001). Historically, Black communities have been engaged in an ongoing struggle against racial oppression. As such, one would assume that Black individuals are more likely to participate in social action.

Black Americans who have experienced racial discrimination are more likely to be cognizant of social inequities and disparities between themselves and other racial groups (White-Johnson, 2012). Frequent exposure to racial discrimination increases the chance a Black individual engages in social action (Szymanski, 2012). This suggests that some awareness of the injustices concerning the Black communities helps motivate Black Americans to engage in social action for their racial community. A study examining oppressed groups found that individuals



who are a member of oppressed groups are more likely to participate in activities that directly benefit their group (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2002).

Rotter's (1966) internal-external control theory focused on individuals' locus of control as a predictor of social action. However, this theory has been criticized for issues of measurement as well as failing to accurately capture the factors that may lead to social action. By contrast, psychological empowerment theory persuasively linked sociopolitical control to social action and is supported by empirical evidence. However, given the variability of social action engagement even in those who have sociopolitical control, it is critical to identify potential moderators of the relation between sociopolitical control and social action. According to sociopolitical development theory, Black Americans need to be critically aware of social inequities to participate in social action. Additionally, Szymanski & Lewis (2016) posited the importance of feeling connected to one's race to commit to social action for one's racial community. Taken together, extant literature suggests that Black Americans with sociopolitical control may be more likely to engage in social action for the Black communities when they have the capacity for critical reflection and when race is central to their identity.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Method**

This study aimed to examine the relation between sociopolitical control among Black Americans and their engagement in social action for their racial community, while investigating the potential moderating effects of two components of critical reflection and racial centrality. This chapter provides an outline of the study design and procedure, participants, measures, and plan for data analysis.

#### **Study Design**

A correlational, cross-sectional, research design was employed to answer the research questions and hypotheses. This design is used to understand the relationship between a set of variables at a particular moment in time. Because the variables of interest are difficult to manipulate, a correlational design is appropriate for the study.

#### **Procedure**

Potential participants were recruited by asking the chairs of various departments in predominantly White and historically Black colleges and universities, presidents of predominantly Black collegiate organizations, and directors of national Black professional organizations to pass on a solicitation email to their students and organization members. Additionally, the researcher asked acquaintances to forward the solicitation email to individuals they know who may fit the inclusion criteria. The solicitation email contained the survey link, through which the participants gained access to the survey through Qualtrics. Identifying data was not collected to ensure anonymity.

The letter of solicitation described the voluntary nature of the study, and the participants' right to withdraw from the study without penalty. The letter also asked potential participants to

forward the email to other men and women of African descent who may meet the inclusion criteria for the study.

## **Participants**

Participants consisted of individuals who identify as being of African descent, such as Black, African-American, Afro-Caribbean, and Biracial individuals. Participants were at least 18 years of age. Participants did not need to be a U.S. citizen to complete the survey but must have resided in the United States for at least five years. The years of residence as an inclusion criteria was based on the literature, which suggested that length of residency may be associated with increased perceptions of racism (Gee, Ryan, Laflamme, & Holt, 2006; Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002). It may be extrapolated that new immigrants may not perceive as much discrimination and thereby not have the critical awareness of the oppressive situation specific to the United States.

## **Instruments**

**Demographic questionnaire.** A demographic questionnaire was administered to obtain background information from participants in the study. The following demographic information was obtained: age, gender, race, length of residency in the United States, highest level of education, and occupation/student status. This information was used to provide descriptive information of the sample.

**Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991).** The SPCS is a 17-item measure, using a 6-point, Likert-type scale, designed to assess individuals' self-perceptions of their ability to organize people and influence policy decisions. SPCS consists of two subscales—Leadership Competence and Policy Control, but a total score can be derived. The SPCS was validated on a sample of predominantly White, undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory psychology course and a sample of predominantly White, community

residents recruited from a voluntary organization meeting, and a predominantly White sample recruited from four Methodist churches. The reported Cronbach's alpha for the two subscales ranged from .75 to .78 (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). The scale has subsequently been used with other racial groups, including urban youths of color (e.g., Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan, & Hsieh, 2006). The internal consistency reliability for present sample was .82.

**Involvement in African American Activism Scale (IAAS; Szymanski, 2012).** The IAAS is a 17-item instrument designed to assess involvement in African American activism. Activism includes joining an African American organization or group, donating money to causes related to the African American community, participating in marches, among many others. Participants are instructed to identify the degree to which they engage in each activity on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (very untrue of me) to 7 (very true of me). Examples include "I am involved in planning/organizing African American events and activities" and "I educate others about African American issues". The internal consistency alpha coefficient reported for the scale has ranged from .94 to .95 (Szymanski, 2012). The internal consistency of the scale based on the present sample was .95. IAAS is a modified version of the Involvement of Feminist Activism Scale (IFAS; Szymanski, 2004). IAAS was validated on an African American adult sample (Szymanski, 2012).

**Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS; Diemer et al., 2014).** The CCS is comprised of three subscales: Critical Reflection - Perceived Inequality, Critical reflection - Egalitarianism, and Critical Action, and uses a 6-point Likert-Type scale to assess the reflection and action components of Freire's (1993) notion of critical consciousness (Diemer et al., 2014). All three subscales were administered, but only the two subscales comprising the critical reflection

component were used in the analysis. Critical reflection – Perceived Inequality is comprised of eight items assessing one’s critical awareness of social inequalities, e.g., the awareness that certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education, whereas, Critical Reflection - Egalitarianism is comprised of five items measuring attitudes towards equality among all groups in society, e.g., the belief that all groups should be given an equal chance in life (Diemer et al., 2014; Diemer & Blustein, 2006). The scale was developed and validated on a sample of Black American youths attending an urban high school located in a predominately poor and working class neighborhood. The internal consistency for Critical Reflection - Perceived Inequality was reported as .90, and the internal consistency for Critical Reflection - Egalitarianism was reported as .88 (Diemer et al, 2014). Based on the present sample, the internal consistency for Critical Reflection—Perceived Inequality was .94, and the internal consistency for Critical Reflection—Egalitarianism was .75.

**Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al.,1997).** The MIBI is a multidimensional measure of Black racial identity, comprised of Racial Centrality, Public Regard, Private Regard, and Racial Ideology subscales, and was validated on a sample of Black American college students from two universities, a predominately White institution and a Historical Black university. The entire measure was administered, but only the Racial Centrality Scale, an 8-item subscale used to measure the extent to which race is central to one’s identity, was included in the analysis. The reported Cronbach’s alpha for the Racial Centrality Scale was .70 (Sellers et al., 1997). The internal consistency of the scale based on the present sample was .75.

## **Analysis**

The following hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression:

- a. Black Americans' sociopolitical control will predict social action for their racial community, such that higher sociopolitical control will be associated with greater involvement in African American activism.
- b. Critical Reflection - Perceived Inequality will moderate the relation between sociopolitical control and social action for Black Americans, such that greater Critical Reflection - Perceived Inequality will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.
- c. Critical reflection - Egalitarianism will moderate the relation between sociopolitical control and social action for Black Americans, such that greater Critical Reflection - Egalitarianism will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.
- d. Racial centrality will moderate the relation between sociopolitical control and social action for Black Americans, such that higher racial centrality will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism.

Participants' scores on sociopolitical control, critical reflection - perceived inequality, critical reflection - egalitarianism, and racial centrality were standardized and entered in the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis. The three interaction terms based on the standardized predictor and moderators (sociopolitical control x critical reflection - perceived inequality; sociopolitical control x critical reflection - egalitarianism; sociopolitical control x racial centrality) were entered in the second step (Frazier et al., 2002).

To reduce the probability of a Type II error and optimally assess the study hypotheses, an *a priori* statistical power analysis was conducted to determine the number of participants required for this study. The number of participants was determined using G\* Power analysis

(Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), based on the following assumed values:  $\alpha$  of 0.05, power of 0.80, a medium effect size ( $f^2$ ) of 0.15, based on the literature on related constructs (Szymanski and Lewis, 2015), and 7 predictors (including the predictor, moderators, and interaction terms) for a hierarchical multiple regression. Given these parameters, an overall minimum sample size of 103 was required for this study.

## Chapter Four

### Results

The primary purpose of this study was to examine Black Americans' perceived sociopolitical control and their social action engagement for Black communities. Further, the study aimed to assess whether critical reflection—perceived inequality, critical reflection—egalitarianism, and racial centrality moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and Black Americans' activism for their racial communities. The hypothesized model for this study was based on the theories and research on psychological empowerment, sociopolitical development theory, critical consciousness, and racial centrality. In this chapter, the descriptive statistics of the sample will be described, and the findings from the primary analyses of the study will be presented and discussed.

### Descriptive Statistics

One hundred and eleven participants of African descent were recruited for this study. Table 1 displays the demographics of the participants in the study. The overall sample was comprised of 88 (79.3%) women and 23 (20.7%) men, between the ages of 20 and 70 years old. The mean age of participants was 34.5 ( $SD = 9.662$ ). The participants' level of education ranged from a high school diploma to doctoral degrees, with 41 (36.9%) participants with a Bachelor's degree, 38 (34.2%) with a Master's degree, 18 (16.2%) with a Doctoral degree, 12 (10.8%) with Some College, and 2 (.018%) with a High School Diploma. All participants self-identified as a person of African descent. Most of the participants identified as Black American or African American and Afro-Caribbean.

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Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=111)*



	<i>M</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Gender			
Female	-	88	79.3%
Male	-	23	20.7%
Identity			
Black or African American	-	71	63.9%
Afro-Caribbean	-	29	26.1%
African	-	7	6.3%
Biracial/Multiracial	-	3	2.7%
Other	-	1	.9%
Age	34.5	-	-
Level of Education			
High School Diploma	-	2	.018%
Some College	-	12	10.8%
Bachelors	-	41	36.9%
Masters	-	38	34.2%
Doctorate	-	18	16.2%
Student Status			
Current Students	-	84	75.7%
Not Students	-	27	24.3%
Citizenship Status			
Citizen	-	110	99.1%
Resident	-	1	.9%

### Primary Study Variables

Prior to conducting inferential statistics, descriptive statistics for the primary variables of the study were obtained. The statistics of the following variables are presented in Table 2:

sociopolitical control (measured by SPCS), racial centrality (measured MIBI: Racial Centrality

subscale), social action (measured by IAAS), critical reflection: perceived inequality and critical reflection: egalitarianism (measured by CCS).

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Primary Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sociopolitical Control	4.4171	.66606
Racial Centrality	5.7376	.94010
Critical Reflection—Perceived Inequality	4.5372	1.12495
Critical Reflection—Egalitarianism	4.8108	.65578
Social Action	4.2803	1.62702

### Hypothesis Testing

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine the study's model and the interaction among the variables. The variables were transformed to z-scores prior to the main analysis to reduce problems with multicollinearity, as recommended by Frazier, Tix, and Barron (2004). The study hypotheses were partly supported as illustrated in Table 3. The first step was significant with sociopolitical control and racial centrality as predictors of social action engagement in Black communities. The second step, the interaction among the variables, was not significant, suggesting that critical reflection – perceived inequality, critical reflection – egalitarianism, and racial centrality do not moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action.

**Hypothesis 1.** The first hypothesis predicted that Black Americans with high sociopolitical control will report higher social action involvement in Black communities. As seen in Table 4, the results of the hierarchical regression showed that participants' sociopolitical

control significantly predicted their engagement in social action for Black communities,  $\beta = .328$   $t(106) = 3.928, p < .001$ .

**Hypothesis 2.** The second hypothesis predicted that critical reflection—perceived inequality would strengthen the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. As seen in Table 4, the results of the hierarchical regression showed that critical reflection—perceived inequality did not significantly moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action,  $\beta = -.072$   $t(106) = -.860, p = .392$ .

**Hypothesis 3.** This hypothesis predicted that critical reflection—egalitarianism would moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action among Black Americans. As seen in Table 4, results of the hierarchical regression showed that critical reflection—egalitarianism did not significantly moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action,  $\beta = .040$   $t(106) = .438, p = .663$ .

**Hypothesis 4.** The last hypothesis predicted that racial centrality would moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action, such that greater racial centrality will strengthen the relationship between sociopolitical control and Black Americans social action involvement in Black communities. As seen in Table 4, results of the hierarchical multiple regression showed that racial centrality did not moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action,  $\beta = .067$   $t(106) = .734, p = .465$ . However, racial centrality was significant as a predictor,  $\beta = .429$   $t(106) = 4.943, p < .001$ .

Table 3

<i>Model Summary of Hierarchal Multiple Regression</i>									
Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Std Error of Estimate	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	Sig <i>F</i> Change

1	.562	.316	.290	1.37121	.316	12.217	4	106	.000
2	.568	.323	.277	1.38390	.007	.355	3	103	.785

Table 4

*Summary of Hierarchal Multiple Regression of Predicting Variables- Model 1*

Predicting Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sociopolitical Control	.534	.136	.328	3.928	.000
Racial Centrality	.698	.141	.429	4.943	.000
Critical Reflection—Perceived Inequality	.024	.141	.015	.169	.866
Critical Reflection—Egalitarianism	-.083	.135	-.051	-.617	.538

Note.  $R^2 = .316$ .  $p < .001$

*Summary of Hierarchal Multiple Regression of Predicting Variables- Model 2*

Predicting Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sociopolitical Control	.556	.142	.342	3.907	.000*
Racial Centrality	.671	.147	.412	4.555	.000*
Critical Reflection—Perceived Inequality	.022	.142	.013	.154	.878
Critical Reflection—Egalitarianism	-.082	.139	-.050	-.587	.558
Interaction					
SPCS x CCS—Perceived Inequality	-.104	.121	-.072	-.860	.392
SPCS x CCS—Egalitarianism	.048	.110	.040	.438	.663
SPCS x Racial Centrality	.108	.147	.067	.734	.465

Note.  $R^2 = .323$ .  $p = .785$

*Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables*

Variable	SPCS	RC	CCS- PI	CCS-E
SPCS	1			
RC	.090	1		
CCS-PI	-.011	.363**	1	
CCS-E	.252**	-.003	.008	1

*Note:* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; SPCS= Sociopolitical Control; RC = Racial Centrality; CCS-PI = Critical Consciousness—Perceived Inequality; CCS-E: Critical Consciousness—Egalitarianism

### Summary

The results of the statistical analyses provided partial support for the hypotheses of this study. It was first hypothesized that Black Americans' levels of perceived sociopolitical control will predict their engagement in social action for Black communities. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that Blacks' perceived sociopolitical control significantly predicted higher social action engagement in Black communities. This analysis demonstrated that Black Americans that perceived themselves to have sociopolitical control were more likely to engage in activism for Black communities.

The second hypothesis proposed that critical reflection—perceived inequality will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action among Black Americans. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that the interaction effect was not significant, suggesting that greater consciousness of perceived inequality does not

increase the likelihood of Black Americans with sociopolitical control to engage in social action behaviors for Black communities.

The third hypothesis predicted that critical reflection—egalitarianism will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action, such that greater critical reflection—egalitarianism will strengthen the relation between sociopolitical control and social action among Blacks. This hypothesis was not supported by the results of the hierarchal multiple regression, suggesting that believing in equality among all people did not increase the likelihood that Black Americans with sociopolitical control would engage in social action activism for Black communities.

The fourth hypothesis proposed that Black Americans' racial centrality would moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action for Black communities. The results of the hierarchal multiple regression showed that racial centrality did not moderate the relationship, rather, racial centrality was a predictor of social action. Thus, Black Americans who perceived themselves as having greater sociopolitical control and perceived their race to be central to their experience were more likely to engage in social action for Black communities.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

The present study examined Black Americans' sociopolitical control, their engagement in social action for Black communities, and factors that potentially strengthened the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action for Black communities. This study aimed to better understand the factors that influence Black Americans to become involved in social action for Black communities, with the goal of empowering Blacks to engage in social action. This aim is in line with counseling psychology's mission to train culturally competent clinicians and create effective outreach opportunities to assist Blacks in managing the effects of dealing with social injustices and fighting against it. This chapter will examine and interpret the findings of the present study, discuss the limitations, provide clinical implications, and present directions for future research.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The first question investigated by this study inquired whether sociopolitical control predicts Black Americans engagement in social action for Black communities. Previous research suggested that the greater one's perceived ability to lead, organize people, and influence policy decisions, the more likely one is to be committed to engaging in social action (Zimmerman, 1995). Given this finding, it was hypothesized that Black Americans' sociopolitical control will predict their engagement in social action for Black communities, such that greater sociopolitical control will lead to greater involvement in Black American activism. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that, as hypothesized, Black Americans with higher sociopolitical control were more likely to engage in social action involvement in Black communities. This result suggests Black Americans who feel confident in their sociopolitical

leadership and decision-making skills are more likely to participate in activism on issues related to Black communities. This result aligns with previous literature that suggested that greater sociopolitical control often leads to greater social action engagement (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Christens et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1999).

Secondly, this study sought to examine whether critical reflection—perceived inequality moderates the relationship between Black Americans’ sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for their racial communities. Literature has reported that critical reflection causes one to feel efficacious, increasing agency to act on social inequities (Diemer & Rapa, 2016; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Thus, critical reflection is often considered a precursor to critical action (Watts et al., 2011). Watt (2007) reported people with critical consciousness will aim to enhance their awareness and skills to effectively address social injustices. It was therefore hypothesized that critical reflection—perceived inequality will moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action among Black Americans, such that Black Americans with sociopolitical control would be more likely to engage in social action when they also had higher critical reflection—perceived inequality. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression did not support this hypothesis. It appears that consciousness of social inequities does not increase the likelihood of Black Americans with sociopolitical control engaging in social action for Black communities.

Jemal (2017) reported an individual must be involved in some form of social action to fully grasp the depth of a social problem. Thus, it is possible that there is an iterative relationship between critical reflection—perceived inequality, such that social action engagement precedes critical reflection, which in turn, may further strengthen social action engagement. Yet, the fact



that critical reflection—perceived inequality did not even serve as a predictor of social action is somewhat puzzling.

The literature suggests that critical consciousness is the interaction between motivation and evolving structures of thought, in which each component influences the other (Mustakova-Possardt, 1998). This idea was further underscored by Diemer et al. (2017), who stated critical motivation might be a significant component of critical consciousness. Perhaps, critical motivation is a significant factor and is needed to propel individuals with consciousness of social inequities to engage in social action. Critical motivation is defined as the perceived capacity and motivation to address perceived injustices for social change (Diemer et al., 2016). It is unclear how much critical reflection—perceived inequality, as it was operationalized in the present study, also tapped the construct of critical motivation. Additionally, critical consciousness is theorized to manifest when individuals feel socially supported to explore and challenge social inequities (Diemer et al., 2006; Diemer and Li, 2011). Therefore, in addition to motivation, previous literature is suggesting social support is important to consider for sociopolitical action. However, social support was not included as a variable in the present study.

Wallin-Ruschman (2018) stated that socio-political-cultural-historical consciousness (SPCHC) is the highest level of critical consciousness and posited that previous critical consciousness models neglect the emotional and relational component of critical consciousness. The emotional experience one has can propel or prevent them from engaging in social action, such as when fear might serve to prevent action (Wallin-Ruschman, 2018). Similarly, feeling hopeless can impede one from taking social action, particularly if several personal attempts were made to help eradicate social injustices, but there was little to no perceived progress after these attempts. Thus, it is possible that the emotional component of critical consciousness is a

determining factor when deciding to participate in social action. This study did not measure the emotional experience of critical consciousness—perceived inequality.

Thirdly, this study sought to examine whether critical reflection—egalitarianism will strengthen the relationship between Black Americans' sociopolitical control and their engagement in social action for their racial communities. There has been minimal empirical support for a relationship between political participation and critical reflection—egalitarianism due to limited studies that examine both constructs together (Diemer & Rapa, 2016). However, this study included this construct to gauge a better understanding of its influence on the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. It was hypothesized that greater critical reflection—egalitarianism will strengthen the relationship between sociopolitical control and Black Americans involvement in activism for their racial community. The results of the hierarchal multiple regression revealed critical reflection—egalitarianism does not significantly influence the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. Similarly, to critical-reflection—perceived inequality, this variable may not have moderated the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action because it is not tapping participants' critical motivation level. Furthermore, a recent study found critical reflection—egalitarianism to have a negative association to social action (Diemer et al., 2017). The study found one's perception of a just society does not motivate an individual enough to engage in social action (Diemer et al., 2017), and this result was supported by the results of this study.

Lastly, this study examined whether racial centrality moderates the relationship between sociopolitical control and Black Americans' social action in their racial communities. Syzmanski and Lewis (2016) suggested that connectedness to one's racial identity may lead to commitment to social action for one's racial communities. A previous study conducted on Black American

undergraduate students revealed that those that reported race as a central component to their identity were more engaged in Black-related organizations (Chavous, 2000). Given these findings, this study hypothesized that higher racial centrality would strengthen the relationship between sociopolitical control and involvement in African American activism. This hypothesis was not supported. Instead, racial centrality was found to be a predictor of social action, such that race has a direct influence on Blacks' engagement in social action for their racial communities.

Individuals engage in social action when they have a strong sense of community belonging (Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Kim, 2002). Bobo and Gilliam (1990) found group consciousness increased activism among Blacks. McClurg (2006) indicated that social networks can encourage high levels of involvement in sociopolitical activism. These findings suggest race as a salient identity enhances group membership and perhaps encourages an individual to participate in sociopolitical activism for Black communities. This literature could explain the direct relationship between racial centrality and social action.

None of the hypothesized interactions were significant. This result could be in part due to the statistical analyses used to examine the research hypotheses. Hierarchical multiple regression is known to produce non-significant findings when interaction effects are small (Frazier et al., 2004). Moreover, because the a priori power analysis assumed medium effects when calculating the number of participants, it is possible that power was too low to detect small effects.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to the present study. The majority of participants in the study had at least a college degree or higher. The sample population's educational attainment level supersedes the average educational attainment for both the general population of the United

States and Black Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). People with at least a college degree, who feel more confident in their sociopolitical control abilities, may be more likely to engage in social action for Black communities. Therefore, the results may not fully generalize to individuals without a college degree. Most of the participants were women, and it is unclear whether the results are as applicable to men. Additionally, self-selection bias is a possible limitation.

The study's sample population had 36.1% of participants that self-identified as Afro-Caribbean and African, and 99.1% reported being a citizen of the United States. Previous studies reported length of residence in the United States will lead to more experience with and recognition of discrimination (Gee, Ryan, Laflamme, & Holt, 2006; Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002). Additionally, studies have shown the second-generation Americans reached greater socioeconomic attainment than their parents (Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002). They typically placed an importance on professional success and working hard (Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002). A study conducted by Pew Research Center reported most second-generation Americans identity is still strongly tied to their ancestral roots (Pew Research Center, 2013). Therefore, it is unclear whether the strength of the moderating variables was impacted by having a significant number of participants self-identify as an Afro-Caribbean and whether their perception of social inequities experienced by Blacks is impacted by having immigrant parents.

There was no assessment of current and prior factors that could have influenced the participants' perceived sociopolitical control. Thus, although the study demonstrates that sociopolitical control is an important factor in predicting Black Americans' social action engagement, it is not clear what factors may help to increase Blacks' sociopolitical control.

Participants' outcome expectations were not assessed, which makes it unclear whether their willingness to engage in social action was influenced by their expectation that their social action engagement would be effective. Furthermore, it is unclear whether it is necessary for participants to know their action will make an impact in order to engage in social action.

It is unknown whether other variables influenced Black Americans sociopolitical control and social action, such as being a part of a cultural environment in which frequent discussions occur about the importance of socially acting for issues affecting Black communities. The study did not assess whether the participants received specific teachings and/or trainings on enhancing their perceived sociopolitical control or their likelihood of engaging in social action.

### **Implications**

There are several implications from the results of this study. This study builds on the current empirical literature. Previous research reported individuals with sociopolitical control engage in social action. The literature also suggested that critical reflection is important in social action engagement, and racial centrality may positively influence the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. There were no studies that examined all variables in one model prior to this study. The findings suggest that Black Americans participate in social action for Black communities when their perceived sociopolitical control is high and when race is a salient component of their identity. The findings further suggest that being conscious of social inequities and believing equality among all people is not enough to motivate Black Americans to engage in sociopolitical action for their racial communities. This is important to know because it can inform Black communities and mental health professionals of factors that may or may not increase one's likelihood to socially act.

Previous research on sociopolitical control, social action, and critical reflection were predominantly conducted on college aged and adolescent students (Zimmerman et al., 1999; Diemer & Li, 2011; Watts et al., 1999; Ginwright & James, 2002; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The average age of participants in this study was 34.5 and consisted predominantly of working professionals that obtained at least a Bachelor's degree, thus expanding the demographics of Black Americans in the empirical literature.

This study further supports counseling psychology's mission of social justice. Psychologists can develop outreach and consultation services for individuals and organizations to facilitate social justice advocacy. Psychologists can be a pivotal part of helping Black Americans with their social action engagement. Furthermore, it has been previously known that sociopolitical control helps decrease helplessness, and buffers against mental health effects (Zimmerman et al., 1999). Based on this information and the results of the study, psychologists can develop ways to increase racial consciousness and enhance sociopolitical control to decrease mental health effects and increase social action engagement.

The study's results did not support the hypotheses that critical reflection—perceived inequality and egalitarianism would moderate the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action, which can potentially be a result of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. According to Dr. Joy DeGruy people of African descent can experience social, emotional, and economic difficulties due to being descendants of African slaves (Mims, Higginbottom, & Reid, 2007). The symptoms are stated to be similar to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, in which Blacks can experience emotional numbing, identity issues, and interpersonal relationships, as it pertains to the effects of slavery (Mims, Higginbottom, & Reid, 2007). It further implies there is an uninterrupted snowball effect that manifests through generations. With this perspective in mind,

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome may have been an integral factor to the reason critical reflection—perceived inequality and egalitarianism did not strengthen the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. For example, desiring equality during the Jim Crow era (e.g. quality education, restaurants) and being vocal about it led many Blacks to be shot, lynched, severely beaten, or run out of town (Mims, Higginbottom, & Reid, 2007). The participants in the study reported being conscious of the social inequities Blacks experience and desired egalitarianism but it did not reflect in greater desire to engage in sociopolitical action for Black communities.

DeGruy (2005) reported slavery was an assault on Black men and women's psyches and caused a legacy of trauma that is observed in Blacks' present behaviors and beliefs (DeGruy, 2005). A symptom of this mentalcide is called vacant esteem. It is the belief about one's worth, but not the actual measurement of one's worth, and is passed through generations, such as, a community belief system (DeGruy, 2005). The community agrees upon their members' worth, acceptable behaviors, community standards, educational attainment and professional possibilities (DeGruy, 2005). Thus, setting the foundation for what achievements are practical and feasible for its members and society plays a significant role through laws, policies, media, and institutions (DeGruy, 2005). Through this perspective, although some Blacks are conscious of social injustices Blacks experience, they might not feel their actions will achieve the outcome they desire and/or believe their desired sociopolitical behaviors are acceptable in society.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The goal of the current study was to gain an understanding of factors that motivate Black Americans to engage in sociopolitical behaviors for their racial communities. Although this study increases insight into Black Americans' social action behaviors, numerous areas of inquiry

still remain. First, as indicated in the limitations, this study did not assess for prior and current variables that could have influenced participants' sociopolitical control. It is recommended that future studies examine whether prior trainings and/or teachings on leadership skills, and community and family values enhance Black Americans' sociopolitical control.

Second, qualitative research could better gauge specific details regarding Black Americans' racial identity, awareness of social inequities and its meaning to them, and their perceived ability to socially act. Additionally, future studies should assess whether expectations about the impact of social action affects one's perception of their sociopolitical control and their likelihood of engaging in social action.

Third, future studies should increase the diversity of participants in their level of education. The majority of the participants in this study had at least a Bachelor's degree. It is unclear whether having college experience heightens the probability of feeling efficacious to socially act and have sociopolitical control, in comparison to someone who does not have college experience. Additionally, it may be important to increase the diversity of gender among participants.

Fourth, this study did not assess for specific types of social action activities. Future studies should assess for the types of social action Blacks with sociopolitical control engage in and whether the type varies based on the level of education and gender.

Fifth, this study found that critical reflection was not a significant factor in the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action. It is recommended that qualitative studies investigate the reason critical reflection is not a significant factor to engage in social action behaviors among Black Americans. Additionally, it would be important to examine



critical motivation as a moderating variable among the relationship between sociopolitical control and social action.

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**Appendix A:**  
**Demographic Questionnaire**

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender:

3. How do you identify?

☐ African

☐ Black American or African American

☐ Afro-Caribbean

☐ Bi-racial or Multiracial (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Highest level of education: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Student status:

☐ I am not a student

☐ I am a student

Major/Concentration: \_\_\_\_\_

7- Are you a citizen?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8- What is the number of years you have resided in the U.S.?

☐ 0-4 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10+ years

\_\_ I am a citizen

### Appendix B:

**Sociopolitical Control Scale** Please respond to the following questions by circling the response that best describes you. If you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with the statement, circle **1**. If you **DISAGREE**, circle **2**. If you are **UNCERTAIN** or **UNSURE**, circle **3**. If you **AGREE**, circle **4**. If you **STRONGLY AGREE**, circle **5**. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree or Unsure	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am often a leader in groups	1	2	3	4	5
2. I prefer to be a leader rather than a follower.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would rather someone else took over the leadership role when I'm involved in a group project.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can usually organize people to get things done	1	2	3	4	5
5. Other people usually follow my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I like to wait and see if someone else is going to solve a problem so that I don't have to be bothered by it.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would rather not try something I am not good at.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I enjoy political participation because I want to have as much say in running government as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.	1	2	3	4	5



11. I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues which confront our society.	1	2	3	4	5
12. People like me are generally well qualified to participate in the political activity and decision making in our country.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It hardly makes any difference in who I vote for because whoever gets elected does whatever he wants to do anyway.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There are plenty of ways for people to have a say in what our government does.	1	2	3	4	5
15. So many other people are active in local issues and organizations that it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Most public officials wouldn't listen to me no matter what I did.	1	2	3	4	5
17. A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with.	1	2	3	4	5

## **Appendix C:**

### **Involvement in African American Activism**

Indicate to what degree each item describes their involvement in the stated activity. Each statement is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (Very untrue of me) to 7 (Very true of me).

1. I write to politicians and elected officials concerning African American issues
2. I educate others about African American issues.
3. I participate in African American demonstrations, boycotts, marches, and/or rallies.
4. I attend conferences/ lectures/ classes/training on African American issues.
5. I attend African American organizational, political, social, community, and/ or academic activities and events.
6. I am involved in antiracism work.
7. I am active in African American political activities.
8. I am involved in research, writing, and/or speaking about African American issues.
9. I am involved in organizations that address the needs of other minority groups (e.g., women, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons).
10. I am involved in planning/ organizing African American events and activities.
11. I vote for political candidates that support African American issues.
12. I donate money to African American groups or causes.
13. I am involved in African American related teaching and/ or mentoring activities.
14. I am a member of one or more African American organizations and/or groups.
15. I read African American literature.
16. I am a member of one or more African American listservs.
17. I actively participate in African American organizational, political, social, community, and/ or academic activities and events.

## Appendix D:

### Critical Consciousness Scale

Please respond to following items about your racial identity. Please use the 7-point scale to rate the degree to which each item describes how you feel.

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Somewhat agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly agree

1. Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get a good high school education
2. Poor children have fewer chances to get a good high school education
3. Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get good jobs
4. Women have fewer chances to get good jobs
5. Poor people have fewer chances to get good jobs
6. Certain racial or ethnic groups have fewer chances to get ahead
7. Women have fewer chances to get ahead
8. Poor people have fewer chances to get ahead
9. It is a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom
10. It would be good if groups could be equal
11. Group equality should be our ideal
12. All groups should be given an equal chance in life
13. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally
14. Participated in a civil rights group or organization
15. Participated in a political party, club or organization
16. Wrote a letter to a school, community newspaper, or publication about a social or political issue
17. Contacted a public official by phone, mail, or email to tell him/her how you felt about a social or political issue
18. Joined in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting
19. Worked on a political campaign
20. Participated in a discussion about a social or political issue
21. Signed an email or written petition about a social or political issue
22. Participated in a human rights, gay rights, or women's rights organization or group

## Appendix E:

### Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI)

Please respond to following items about your racial identity. Please use the 7-point scale to rate the degree to which each item describes how you feel.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somewhat Disagree 4 = Neutral 5 = Somewhat Agree 6 = Agree 7 = Strongly Agree

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.                          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 2. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 3. Black people should not marry interracially.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 4. I feel good about Black people.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 5. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 6. In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image.                                    | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 7. I am happy that I am Black.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 8. I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements.                              | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 9. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 10. Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism.         | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 11. Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.                                   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 12. Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks.      | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 13. Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.                              | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 14. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.                     | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 15. In general, others respect Black people.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 16. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.                                | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 17. Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.    |               |

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I often regret that I am Black.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. Blacks and Whites have more commonalties than differences.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36. Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
37. Because America is predominantly white, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
38. Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
39. Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
40. Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
41. Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
42. The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
43. Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
44. Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
45. There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
46. The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions within the system. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
47. Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
48. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
49. Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
51. Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
52. Blacks are not respected by the broader society. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
53. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
54. I am proud to be Black. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
55. I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to this society. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
56. Society views Black people as an asset. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7



October 25, 2017

Debeka Bennett

Dear Ms. Bennett,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your research proposal entitled "Black Americans' Social Action Engagement in their Racial Community: Examining the Roles of Sociopolitical Control, Critical Reflection, and Racial Centrality" and has categorized it as exempt.

Enclosed for your records is the signed Request for Approval form.

Please note that, where applicable, subjects must sign and must be given a copy of the Seton Hall University current stamped Letter of Solicitation or Consent Form before the subjects' participation. All data, as well as the investigator's copies of the signed Consent Forms, must be retained by the principal investigator for a period of at least three years following the termination of the project.

Should you wish to make changes to the IRB approved procedures, the following materials must be submitted for IRB review and be approved by the IRB prior to being instituted:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- *If applicable*, any new or revised materials, such as recruitment fliers, letters to subjects, or consent documents; and
- *If applicable*, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions and IRBs.

At the present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

*In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.*

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.

Professor

Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Minsun Lee

**Office of Institutional Review Board**

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